DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 390 079 CS 509 087

AUTHOR Boileau, Don M.
TITLE Expanding the Profession: Ideas for Change.
PUB DATE 18 Nov 95
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (81st, San Antonio, TX, November 18-21, 1995).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Course Content; *Curriculum Development; *Curriculum Evaluation; *Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; *Guidelines; Secondary School Curriculum; *Speech Communication
IDENTIFIERS *Professional Concerns; *Speech Communication Association

ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a high school curriculum that incorporates education in oral communication as an essential graduation skill--a skill taught systematically by trained instructors in a communication course. The paper points out, however, that other innovative arrangements are possible as long as the instruction is systematic; follows professionally developed guidelines; and uses instructors who have had competent instruction in multiple facets of communication theory. The paper notes that three major thrusts compose this proposal for the ideal curriculum: identification of the curriculum-approaches to skills; identification of how these skills will be taught systematically; and identification of the training of classroom instructors. The paper states that the proposal must then be followed by a diffusion plan following Everett Roger's diffusion model. The paper identifies an excellent already available model curriculum developed by the Speech Communication Association (SCA). In conclusion, the paper points out that various groups in SCA might undertake the following actions to offer greater leadership for schools in this country: (1) K-12 and EPB could select 30-40 people to commit themselves to submitting 304 articles over the next 2-3 years to various education journals as a way of creating a knowledge base; (2) SCA could finance the massive distribution of new curriculum guidelines; (3) workshops on new curriculum goals could be held in each state; (4) research studies could be encouraged to show that each element of the curriculum goal is viable; and (5) graduate students could be encouraged to do research concerning the ideal secondary school curriculum. (TB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 390 079

EXPANDING THE PROFESSION
ideas for change

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy.

Don M. Boileau

George Mason University

1995 SCA Convention

San Antonio, TX

PROGRAM: How the K-12 Section and the SCA might offer

Greater Leadership in Oral Communication Education to the Schools of this country.

November 18, 1995

CS505087

EXPANDING THE PROFESSION

Ideas for Change

To dream is the right of each person; to think of utopia is the duty of each educated citizen; to dream of a utopian education system for a speech communication educator should be required of each of us. When we wake up, the dream should be kept and the inquisitive minds ask how. In 28 years of being a speech education instructor, no one until Tom Hopkins has made me stand before an audience and answer the question, **"How would you do it?"**

The innovation being proposed in my dream is a high school curriculum that incorporates education in oral communication as an essential graduation skill--*a skill taught systematically by trained instructors.* The emphasis in this goal is on skill because of the secondary context. Yet, I am also implying a position--using the communication competency debate--in which knowledge of the options from a repertoire formulate the teaching. While this instruction is most likely in a communication course, other innovative arrangements are possible as long as the instruction is (1) systematic , (2)follows professionally developed guidelines (3) by instructors who have had competent instruction in multiple facets of communication theory. Curriculum studies suggest that this goal is not being reached by most schools in the United States. Over the years many individual state studies have been published showing, at the best, only a partial compliance with this direction, even if it is state mandated, i.e., Oregon.

METHOD: Thus, we return to the question of how do we achieve such a goal.? I would like to follow the general diffusion of innovation theory advocated by Everett Rogers in Diffusion of Innovations, 4th Edition, 1995. The five basic stages are (1) knowledge, (2) persuasion, (3) decision, (4) implementation, and (5) confirmation. For the sake of time, I am limiting my observations to the first two stages, since they are critical to the decision process. Rogers suggests that before beginning the process, one should examine the (a) previous practice, (b) the felt needs/problems, (c) innovativeness, and (d) norms of the system. The interaction of these variables is stated by Rogers as, "The *innovation-decision process* is the process through which an individual (or other decision making unit) passes from first knowledge of an innovation, to forming an attitude toward the innovation, to a decision to adopt or reject, to implementation of the new idea, and to confirmation of this decision" [p. 163]. Obviously, implementation of this goal would be a major educational innovation.

Previous Practice suggests that in all three areas we have a major challenge. No state has complete compliance with such oral communication practice. The percentage of speech communication trained instructors has been low over the years. In the mid-west speech communication instruction is better than other regions because of the strong programs at many Central States' university and college programs. Yet, speech communication instruction as a general curricular goal is still not incorporated into the system.

Felt needs/problems reflect both attitudinal and structural concerns. Structurally, two important areas need to be addressed: (1) direct focus in the curriculum, and (2) training of teachers. Both are mammoth problems involving major segments of the educational

community from school boards and principals to professional associations and teacher training institutions. For attitudinal concerns, the task is no less daunting, as a major mind set has to be changed. Ironically, the business and professional community is the one area that consistently over the years has been supportive of direct instruction of communication skills. Almost every area of the educational establishment has to change its idea of what needs to be taught. My own belief is that a major problem is the uncertainty about what is the speech communication curriculum among not only educators in general, but even among ourselves--both problems need resolving.

Innovativeness implies "the degree to which an individual or other unit of adoption is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other members of a system, " [Rogers, p. 252] reflects in education major disagreements. To illustrate, we are now at the throes of measuring previous "reforms" and half way toward the reforms of "Goals 2000." Yet the fundamental educational curriculum still is what I experienced in the 40's and 50's. Thousands of classrooms reflect creative teachers with fantastic innovations happening--items sometimes covered in the media, but for the most parts are ignored--on an individual, school, or even district level. The usual adopter categories (innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards) are all found in education and are closely related in education to the directions of professional associations. The "S-Curve" of innovations would suggest that the current situation is near the bottom of the curve and that the achievement of our goal is still a situation reflecting "innovators" (the first adopter category in innovation theory) for those strong programs currently exist..

Norms of the social system are such that for the most part a speech communication curriculum is view as unique and not an expected norm, though it might be codified as part of the law or even as a direction for some groups, i.e., The National Council of Teachers of English has long noted oral skills as one of their major curricular goals, while the practices of teaching literature dominant the reality, although composition has gained considerably in recent years. Study after study has concluded that one or more oral skills are necessary in the work place, yet the educational establishment continues to ignore that request that oral skills are part of the norm. In teacher training, knowledge of the sociological and/or psychological foundation of teacher training is an expected norm, although many studies of what traits constitute a good teacher do not mention those areas. Instead most investigations acknowledge that good teachers have good communication skills. Another norm within our own association is to acknowledge the importance of secondary education having communication goals, yet the practices of the association in giving importance to this area are not strong. Norms in a social system need to be addressed in any innovation process.

The Ideal Curriculum Proposal

Three major thrusts compose this proposal: (1) identification of the curriculum--approaches to skills, (2) identification of how these skills will be taught systematically, and (3) identification of the training of classroom instructors. This proposal will then be followed by a diffusion plan following Everett Roger's diffusion model. Within both directions the implications for the Speech Communication Association will be addressed.

The Curriculum

When I graduated from high school in 1960, the ideal curriculum tended to revolve around the development of skills in public speaking, group discussion, and parliamentary procedure. These skills were within the context of making one a productive citizen in a democratic society. Ironically, the context to me has not changed at all--what has changed in that context is the way a democratic society functions today in a media dominated world, which functions with an international context in all areas: politically, economically, religiously, artistically, and socially in ways joined by electronic communication via satellite and computer. Brigance's old dictum of style having to be "instantaneously intelligible" dominates the communication today. [While I was in Alabama I noted within hours of Rabin's assassination that I had heard the responses of King Hussein, President Clinton, the U.S. Ambassador to Israel, the Israeli Ambassador to the United States.]

The Support

Given the recent development of SCA's recommended curriculum approaches under the direction of Roy Berko, an excellent model is available. As with any innovation the provision of goals for teachers still allows them to unfold the situation. To me the ideal curriculum has to include not only the fundamental oral communication skills of a) public speaking, b) small group communication, c) listening, d) interviewing, and e) oral reading, but it also includes frameworks of a) intercultural communication, b) political communication, and c) ethics. But the key ingredient of whatever is done, MUST include segments of what is being called media literacy--the ability to understand the role of, evaluate the influence of,

and relate to alternative forms of mass communication. While this type of communication unfolds, it needs to ADAPT TO THE UNFOLDING OF COMMUNICATION BY COMPUTERS. In a SCA sponsored lecture at the Smithsonian Institute last March, Everett Rogers called this area "computer-mediated communication." He noted that this needed to be added to the usual groupings of interpersonal and mass communication areas to make a defining group of three concentrations for the discipline.

To support teacher choice SCA has published competencies for elementary and secondary students, as *"Speaking and Listening Competencies for Elementary School Students"* and *"Speaking and Listening Competencies for High School Graduates."* By adding the to be published guidelines for Oral Communication Curricula consistent with the Goals 2000 Movement, the teacher will have plenty to choose from to help develop the specific curriculum desired. The key is that the materials are available and communication is positioned as a discipline to be central to the coming era..

The Innovation Plan

The first step in any innovation is the creation of a knowledge base among educators. Decision making units would be "exposed to an innovation's existence and gain some understanding of how it functions" [Rogers, p. 162]. The key here is the *need for awareness knowledge.* To meet this need, what we need to do is blanket the educational journals with information about the curriculum and ways to teach it. Development of the new program for the Goals 2000 is the perfect opportunity. Thus, to create the awareness knowledge

necessary for preceding, we need about 20 to 30 Instructional Development people to write knowledge based articles for about 80 journals.

Whether EPB commissions this task or the Instructional Development Division does not matter, what is important is placing someone in charge of getting out articles to other in developing the core of this knowledge stage. In June Kappan magazine, one of the largest educational journals (circulation over 140,000), published a master list of educational publications that writers would want to use to influence education. Such a list would be a good starting point for this project. What is different for most of these publications is that one sends an inquiry letter about the type of article that might fit. Some have statements or brochures to help people write for them, i.e., "Guidelines for Authors: Kappa Delta Pi Publications. Again, the theme of the Goals 2000 and an ideal speech curriculum is the type of article that would have major appeal.

To illustrate the type of audience one would want to reach in this effort, identify *who the decision makers are for such an innovation.* Obviously, the range begins from analysis of the various constituencies in the educational environment. Both school boards and secondary principals have multiple publications for their journals, but the key is to find the ones decision makers read and target those journals. If one identifies the right ones, requests from the tangential ones may follow. Other areas are the teacher organizations that would begin with both labor unions (National Education Association and the Federation of Teachers) and the two largest honorarys for teachers, Phi Delta Kappa and Kappa Delta Pi. Both have articles of a general, yet scholarly based, interest that answer the *why* and *how* questions.

The most likely group of teachers to be involved in this change, would be English teachers. Thus, The English Journal of NCTE would be an important journal for such knowledge articles. What is needed is someone to organize this effort by identifying desirable outlets, recruiting writers to submit articles, and to follow up on the assignments. If 30 people volunteered to submit four articles each over the next two years--one article every six months--then a major assault would be made on this effort.

Three levels of articles need to be encouraged. First, articles of a more scholarly nature would be appropriate for journals ranging from the pragmatic policy discussions in Kappan to the theoretical discussions in the scholarly Harvard Educational Review. Secondly, articles focusing on the "how" would be appropriate for practitioners. These submissions would vary from the nature of the curriculum for administrators (the association for superintendents and their assistants) to what to do in the classroom for teachers. Also in this category would be a general article on "why" speech communication curriculum is a vital part of reformed education for the national PTA magazine--it reaches virtually hundreds of thousands of decision makers. Third, would be the need for articles for curriculum writers and developers. Many of these people are at the college level so both teacher educator types (Association for Teacher Education--Action in Teacher Education) and curriculum writers (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development--Education Leadership) need to be addressed.

The only way such a knowledge base can be created is to inform decision makers about the basic importance of a communication curriculum and ways in which it might be

innovated. All major curricular reform movements have at their core a tremendous base of writing, so that slowly people become aware of what can be done. A major example of this endeavor is the "writing as a process" movement that reformed the way writing is taught in the public schools--what I read as a member of the NCTE Curriculum Committee was similar to what I also read as a parent of two elementary students. The key to the knowledge stage was the variety of places one could read appropriate articles.

The second step is persuasion. Roger's argues that to persuade someone about an innovation, decision makers want to know about consequences--"what will its advantages and disadvantages be in my situation?" [Rogers, p.168]. For this question to be answered at a high policy level, solid answers must exist. Without scientific evaluations of an innovation, he warns that the innovation will not have much of chance. Thus, the second major thrust requires studies of effective curriculum programs. We need to study three primary types of questions:

a) What are the successes of those programs that require one semester or one year of speech communication programs?

b) What are the strengths of those teachers who have been systematically been trained in communication theory?

c) In what ways are the SCA recommended curricula successful in meeting the communication needs of modern society?

Obviously, variations in these questions will be helpful, but as a discipline we need to have researchers take on the large policy questions of impact.

Boileau -- A Change Strategy

Persuasion also depends upon our ability to work successfully with other educational groups on agenda setting programs for the future. Not only will a major effort have to be made to work with the current English teachers as the largest single discipline based group of teachers, but we also must work with those administrators who set curriculum.

Two important forces will have to be adapted to--the computer revolution and the changing role of the federal government. For years I felt the federal government would by fiat place speech communication instruction in a favorable position. That will not occur. Yet, we need to work with those changing educational forces in society. Such items as the "School to Work" movement have federal research monies--ways to answer the first question above--for questions involving the centrality of communication in the career work we undertake. Our discipline has been slow to take advantage of these opportunities. Other important angles vary from technology grants for integrating computer work to service learning. The key is that we must adapt to other groups to get the funding for work to show that our goals are working. For example, interesting work in small group work done by the Johnson was funded through handicapped education work.

The third step is the decision itself. Since the grand scheme for such a switch requires others to make the decision according to the model, the preliminary steps above are the directions we must go to influence others.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, various groups within SCA--the K-12 Section, the Instructiona

Development Division, the Committee for Programs at Other Associations, and EPB--might undertake the following actions to offer greater leadership for the schools of this country.

1. A: K-12 and EPB will select 30-40 people to commit themselves to submitting 3-4 articles over the next 2-3 years to various educational journals as a way of creating a knowledge base. These articles will vary from pragmatic explanations to curriculum theory.

B: Massive distribution of the goals will be financed by SCA, so that all school districts, state educational agencies will have the new guides.

C: Workshops will be held by all state associations for teachers in their states in relationship to the new curriculum goals [need to work with the States Advisory Council to coordinate this effort].

D: Several national workshops will be held at related conventions via the committee to encourage such programs at other conventions, e.g. NCTE, IRA.

2. A: Research studies will be encouraged to demonstrate that each element of the goal is viable. The exact questions could be developed by the Educational Policies Board of the Instructional Development Division and circulated among all members.

B: Graduate students need to be encourage to research questions relating to the ideal secondary curriculum.

C: SCA will seek funding from a major foundation to support diffusion efforts by the association of the current curricular guidelines.

D. SCA will seek support of a speech curriculum project similar to the national writing project, so that a massive training program of teachers can precede.